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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of three 2000 issues of a newsletter for Illinois early childhood program directors, providing information on current issues in early childhood education. Regular features in each issue include: "The Director's Toolbox," delineating practical suggestions for directors related to program policies and staff issues; "The Accreditation Corner," detailing procedures for self-evaluation related to accreditation; "Family Friendly Practices," describing early childhood programs especially involved in meeting families' needs; and "Public Policy Update," and "Director's Profile," highlighting the accomplishments of early childhood education or care program directors in Illinois. Periodic features include summaries of relevant research and book reviews. The spring 2000 issue focuses on the emerging leadership role of the family childcare network manager. The summer 2000 issue features information on new opportunities for promoting professional development for early childhood program staff. The fall 2000 issue highlights the development of a powerful marketing program for early childhood education and care programs. (KB)

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The Director's Link
2000

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University **Spring 2000**

Family Child Care Network Managers - A New Role for Early Childhood Leaders

By Carol Dellahousaye

New leaders have emerged on the child care front. Working under various titles within the family child care system, these individuals are building the supply of high-quality child care services one home at a time. In this article they are referred to as Family Child Care Network Managers. As high-level managers they offer a range of intensive and practical support mechanisms to groups of family child care providers. Just like center directors, they manage day-to-day program operations; maintain financial solvency; recruit, train, and supervise staff; market program services; enroll families; engage in fundraising and quality assurance activities; and establish community linkages.

The Importance of Their Role

The demand for child care continues to grow, reflecting the number of families with young children who are being moved from welfare to work. Family child care continues to be parents' first choice. In fact, two-thirds of all children in child care attend family child care home programs.[1] The availability of family child care augments center-based care which is unlikely to ever meet the demand for infant and after-school care to serve all Illinois families in need. The growing demand for infant care and the resulting increased use of family child care magnifies the need for skilled family child care network managers.

The Family Child Care Connection demonstration project has been an important mechanism for learning more about the important role of family child care network managers. Begun in 1991 as a five-year demonstration project, the Family Child Care Connection was funded by a public/private partnership to create enhanced family child care homes for infants and toddlers in Chicago's low-income communities. Through their participation in the project, several women started their own small businesses and improved families' access to quality infant and toddler care in their communities. Many of these women continue to operate their family child care businesses today. The network manager attributes the retention to the various supports made available to the providers through the project.

In an evaluation report of the project, Judith Musick refers to family child care network managers as the cornerstone of the project. The family child care network manager, she says, is the person who "inculcates professionalism, extends educated support, and functions as the mediator, problem-solver, and advocate on behalf of the providers in her network."[2] She acts as a catalyst for providers' personal and professional growth and helps them do the same for parents. In this way, she serves as the first link in a chain of empowerment, beginning with her, extending to her providers, and through them to the parents and children in her network.

The Need for Training

The current political climate for child care in Illinois supports the development of new initiatives in early childhood professional development. New opportunities create new challenges. Advanced training and career development opportunities for child care professionals continue to be extremely limited and sporadic. This is particularly true for family child care network

Continued on page 2

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Continued from front page

managers. Given the numbers of children cared for in family child care and the rights of all children to high-quality care, it is essential that the early childhood community embraces and supports the efforts of family child care network managers.

The training and professional development needs of family child care network managers are easily overlooked. Most child care experts focus on center-based care, fewer are familiar with family child care issues. A recent experience I had at a conference highlights the disconnection between center- and home-based programs. Over lunch, a group of conference participants and I discussed accreditation. In the course of the discussion, I mentioned family child care homes. None of the center directors were aware of accreditation for homes. My reaction was, "How could they not know?"

Family child care network managers need opportunities to enhance their management skills. Just like center directors, these managers play a critical role in determining early childhood program quality. While the state requirements for center directors are low, there are no requirements for family child care network managers. In this time of increased public investment in child care quality, the promotion of a professional development system that considers the advanced educational needs of family child care network managers is particularly opportune. If professional development initiatives are so modest in scope that family child care personnel are excluded, the support for quality improvement efforts as a whole will be adversely affected.

Conclusion

A high-quality learning environment is important for children in all child care settings. With the growing demand for family child care, however, it is more important than ever for the early childhood community to support strategies to improve quality in family child care settings. Family child care needs to be included in all discussions of quality enhancement and professional development. The family child care network manager plays a vital role in the delivery of high-quality services to children and families. They deserve our support and recognition.

1. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (1998). *Child care you can count on.* Baltimore, MD: Author.
2. Musick, J. S. (1996). *Uncovering the many sides of family child care: A study of the Family Child Care Connection, Executive Summary.* Chicago: YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago.

The Director's Link is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois. If you have received more than one copy of this newsletter, please share it with a colleague. Address corrections should be directed to:

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Director's Bookshelf

Bloom, P. J. (2000). Circle of Influence: Implementing Shared Decision Making and Participative Management. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons

Reviewed by Dr. Wanda Newell, Director of Education Programs, McCormick Tribune Foundation

The last decade has seen great changes in early childhood administration. The early childhood director has assumed added responsibilities and duties, with little relief in sight. Paula Jorde Bloom offers a practical way to master the management of any early childhood education program in her book *Circle of Influence: Implementing Shared Decision Making and Participative Management*, the first volume in a new management series published especially for early childhood directors.

Bloom describes participative management as an important method for engaging early childhood teachers and other stakeholders in the decision-making process. The text is easy to read and includes many practical activities that directors can use with their staff to promote collaboration.

Should a director choose to incorporate the ideas presented in this book, I am certain that he or she will experience a difference from the traditional director/teacher relationship—the result being an early childhood program where teachers are more empowered and involvement in decision making is more inclusive.

Circle of Influence is available for purchase ($14.95 plus $3.50 postage) from New Horizons, P.O. Box 863, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045, (847) 295-8131.

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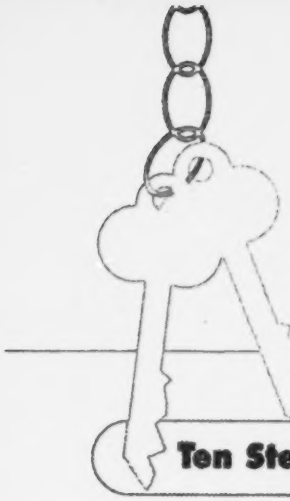

The Director's Toolbox

Making Good Decisions

Making good decisions does not happen by accident. It involves a systematic process of identifying the problem or issue, collecting data, weighing alternatives, and deciding on a course of action. Here are ten steps that will help you make successful decisions.

Ten Steps for Making Successful Decisions

1. Identify and explicitly state the issue that needs to be resolved or the problem that needs to be solved.

2. Identify the key stakeholders whose interests need to be considered in the decision-making process (e.g., teachers, parents, board members, community representatives).

3. Assess how strongly each stakeholder feels about the issue—his or her level of interest—as well as his or her level of expertise regarding the issue.

4. Determine the appropriate level of participation of the staff and other stakeholders. There are four different possibilities.
   - *Unilateral decision making:* The director makes the decision and announces it to the staff and other stakeholders providing a rationale for a particular course of action.
   - *Consultative decision making:* Prior to making a decision, the director seeks information or ideas and suggestions from the staff and other stakeholders.
   - *Collaborative decision making:* The director and key stakeholders define and analyze problems together, generating and evaluating alternatives and deciding on a course of action by unanimous vote, majority vote, or by consensus.
   - *Delegated decision making:* After providing relevant information, the director allows the staff or other stakeholders to make the decision.

5. Identify any constraints that may affect the scope or content of the decision (e.g., time, budget, human resources, external mandates).

6. State explicitly any important values that should be maintained in reaching the final decision. (For example, "Whatever proposal comes forward, we want to maintain small group sizes and maximize teacher-child contact.")

7. Make clear the timeline for deciding and implementing the decision.

8. Make the decision or recommendation.

9. Communicate the reasons for the decision, fully and clearly to all interested parties, including how people's input was used.

10. Evaluate the decision-making process and the outcome of the decision.

From: Bloom, P. J. (2000). Circle of influence: Implementing shared decision making and participative management. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons.

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Research in Review

Illinois Teachers and Directors: Qualifications and Rewards

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership recently conducted two studies exploring the relationship between early childhood educators' qualifications and compensation. The first study compared the compensation of teachers with similar credentials working in different settings. The second study provided baseline data on Illinois directors' salaries.

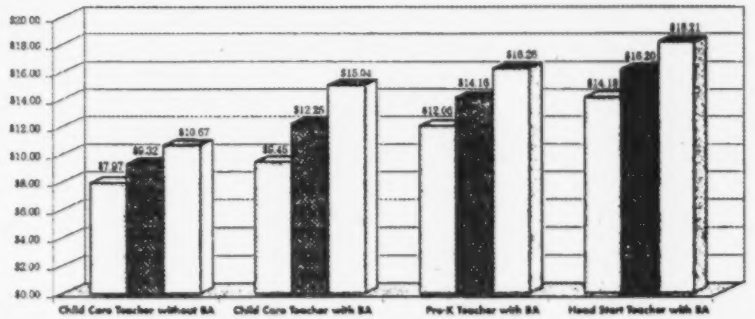
Preschool Teachers in Two Settings: Issues of Parity

While preschool teachers in parent-funded, private preschools, and state-funded prekindergarten programs perform the same job functions, they are rewarded quite differently. Illinois continues to regulate private preschool and child care programs as a social service funded largely through parent fee-for-service, while early childhood educational programs in the state's public school system are supported by tax dollars. It is, therefore, possible for people with similar credentials to work in different systems for vastly different rewards. Graph 1 summarizes these data.

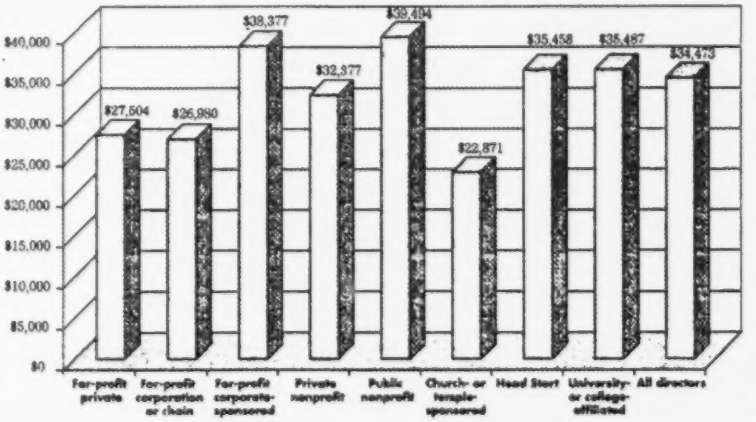
Illinois Directors' Salaries: Baseline Data

Salary data from 493 center directors in Illinois provided some anticipated and some surprising findings. The average director's salary in Illinois is $34,473 ($15.44 per hour). Not surprising, directors with higher levels of education earned higher salaries. In general, directors earned more if they operated more than one site, their program was accredited, or if their program was part of a larger agency. Directors in Northern Illinois earned more than directors in other regions of the state. Directors who operated nonprofit public child care programs such as those run by municipal park and recreation districts or public schools earned the highest salaries. Graph 2 summarizes the salary data by program auspices.

Graph 1. Starting, Average, and Highest Hourly Earnings of Teachers by Program Type and Educational Level



Graph 2. Directors' Salaries by Program Type



The findings from these two studies are summarized in greater detail in the Center's summer and fall Research Notes. You can contact the Center for Early Childhood Leadership at (800) 443-5522, ext. 7709 for free copies or download the documents from the Center's website (www.nl.edu/cecl).

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The Accreditation Corner

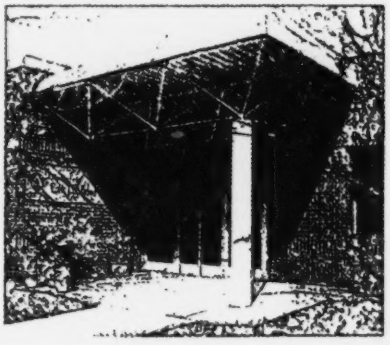
Looking for Accreditation Support?

The task of initiating and completing the self-study process to achieve center can be overwhelming to even the most experienced director. Fortunately, there are now a number of resources to help directors successfully accomplish the process.

- The Statewide Accreditation Mentoring (SAM) Project, sponsored by the Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children, and funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services will support programs seeking accreditation by providing 1) on-site, technical assistance from qualified mentors, and 2) assistance with accreditation application and validation fees. To apply: Contact Kathy Howard, SAM Project Coordinator at 815-626-8872.
- Illinois Resource and Referral Agencies have funding for accreditation fees and technical assistance. Contact your local agency or the INCCRRA office at 800-649-1884 for further information.
- The Chicago Accreditation Partnership will pay 100% of the costs associated with pursuing accreditation such as books, toys, and other developmentally appropriate materials, physical improvements and repairs, and classroom furniture. In addition, individual program consultations and professional development opportunities are available for child care providers and center directors. To be eligible to participate in the Partnership you must represent a Chicago Department of Human Services contracted Head Start and/or child care program; an Illinois Department of Human Services direct-funded or contracted Head Start or child care program; or an IDHS voucher site where 50% of your enrollment consists of children with state vouchers. Contact the Chicago Accreditation Partnership for more information at 312-554-1300.
- The Center for Early Childhood Leadership also provides consultative support to center directors who are interested in pursuing NAEYC accreditation. Center faculty will do on-site observations, conduct an organizational climate assessment of your center, provide in-service training, and assist you with all phases of the self-study process, Contact Eileen Eisenberg, Training Coordinator, at 800-443-5522 ext. 7703.

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership Celebrates Opening of New Training Center

On February 25, 2000, the Center for Early Childhood Leadership hosted an Open House to celebrate the opening of its new office suite and training center located at the Wheeling Campus' Instructional Annex (6310 Capitol Drive). More than 100 people from the NLU and early childhood communities joined the celebration. The new training facility houses nine offices for faculty and staff, kitchen, library, and four training rooms. Funding for office furnishings was provided by the McCormick Tribune Foundation.



Family Friendly Practices

Chicago Youth Centers

The Chicago Youth Centers Fellowship House is nestled within the Chicago Housing Authority Bridgeport complex. This culturally diverse center, serving primarily Hispanic, Asian, and African-American families enrolls 68 children in half-day Head Start and 75 in after-school programs. Fellowship House is known as a "safe haven" within the community, which has a high incidence of gangs, drugs, and reported cases of child abuse.

Elizabeth Chentis, the Head Start director of CYC Fellowship House, believes, "You need to create a vision for the future to ensure that families feel welcome. Our program embraces three themes: a developmentally appropriate child-centered curriculum; an integrated non-violence curriculum, and a year-long enrichment curriculum."

Elizabeth strongly believes in the principle of parent governance. She says, "I tell the parents that their participation in our program is not optional. We need and want their involvement. We begin the year with a parent orientation. Wearing 'Proud Parent' stickers and enjoying good food, families begin a dialogue with the staff about their needs."

Last year's programs included workshops on communication, the importance of play, stress management, and positive discipline. Parents are asked to volunteer in the classroom at least eight hours every three months.

In response to the violence found in the community, the focus of the Week of the Young Child has become a crusade against child abuse. As a part of this effort, parents wear blue ribbons and parade in the community to show their support.

Chicago Youth Centers Fellowship House achieved their first NAEYC accreditation as a part of the Chicago Metro AEYC's Accreditation Project. This past summer, the Head Start programs successfully achieved reaccreditation.

Director's Profile

Vera Robinson Providing Support for Family Child Care Providers

Vera Robinson has been a family child care network manager for the Children's Home and Aid Society's Family Child Care Network for eight years. Based in East St. Louis, the Network reaches over 80 family homes in southern Illinois. These family child care partners are licensed by the State of Illinois, visited twice a month by a CHASI monitor, and provided with 36 hours of early childhood training each year. Vera serves as the supervisor of 11 monitors.

Vera's daily routine involves lending guidance to providers for curriculum ideas, monitoring a lending library of developmentally appropriate child care resource materials and equipment, and providing general support for the home monitors. "Our major need is to provide professional development opportunities to our family child care providers," says Vera. "We have helped some receive their CDA certification, while others have completed Associate of Arts and Bachelor of Arts programs. Our goal is to have all of our homes become accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care."

Vera's work involves managing multiple initiatives funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Department of Children and Family Services, and Early Head Start. Over 410 infants to school-aged children are served in specialized programs that are categorized as families "at risk" due to medical, environmental, or abuse issues. Some of the programs also provide "non traditional" services such as overnight care for children. Each of the network's initiatives includes activities to enhance parenting skills and through training and support groups.

Vera's professional journey has prepared her well for her present position. For the past 25 years, she has dedicated her career to helping children and families whose daily life circumstances are critically stressful. She has worked as a home visitor for Head Start, as a child abuse investigator with the juvenile division of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and as a child care licensing representative. Vera received her BA in sociology from Webster College. She is a licensed clinical social worker.

Vera is blessed with a loving husband, three grown sons, and two granddaughters. Her commitment to children extends into her private life. As a church volunteer, she regularly works with the junior missionary group and the children's choir.

Planning Ahead

Professional Development Opportunities

May 6, 2000

Advocacy Institute—The Director as Child Care Advocate—Tackling the Tough Issues of Turnover, Compensation, and Career Development

In collaboration with the Day Care Action Council of Illinois, Voices for Illinois Children, and the Ounce of Prevention Fund, the Center for Early Childhood Leadership's annual Advocacy Institute this year will focus on the staffing crisis in early care and education. Featured speakers include Joan Costley and Jerome Stermer.

Saturday, May 6
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

National-Louis University
Wheeling Campus

$30 fee includes continental breakfast, workshop sessions, lunch, and handouts.

July 20-22, August 3-5

Financial and Legal Aspects of Child Care Management

This course examines the financial and legal issues involved in establishing and operating early childhood programs. Emphasis is given to the development of sound fiscal policy that addresses the issues of quality, compensation, and affordability.

July 20, 21, 22, August 3, 4, 5
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

National-Louis University
Wheeling Campus

3 s.h. graduate credit, tuition: $1,293.
Instructors: Teri Talan and Bob Siegel

June 11 - July 1, 2000

Take Time Out to Chat with the Experts Online!

This June an enhanced feature of the CECL web site will link you to national child care experts. The Time Out! discussion forum is a place to share issues, exchange information, and post questions to get feedback from other directors. For three weeks, from June 11-July 1, you can log on to Time Out! to chat with one expert each week, including Karen Miller about infant/toddler care, and Gwen Morgan about administration. Watch for more information on this exciting opportunity to chat with the experts right from your center or home.

Go to www.nl.edu/cecl for updates, schedules, and information on how to log on to Time Out! See you online in June!

For information regarding these training opportunities, contact Eileen Eisenberg, Training Coordinator at 1-800-443-5522, ext. 7703.

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University. **Summer 2000**

New Opportunities for Promoting Professional Development

By Valerie Dawkins Krajec

Summer is ending and we can feel it in the air – a new school year. Staff orientation, training calendars, and personal growth plans are a big part of the process as you plan for the new school year.

As a director you can probably recall a moment when one of your teachers made the decision to take an active step in her or his own professional development. You probably remember with a sense of pride how that teacher evolved into a more confident, happy, and effective early childhood professional. While that individual unquestionably benefited from the decision by experiencing the increased job satisfaction that comes with building professional competence, your entire center also benefited from the decision. The children received more appropriate care and education, families were better served, and other teachers may have been motivated and inspired by the example.

If the results are so good, what holds directors back from promoting the professional development of their staff. The quick response most directors give is the lack of time, money, and opportunity.

In the past two years, a number of new initiatives have been launched in Illinois to address these obstacles. This year as you set professional development goals for yourself and your staff, you have unprecedented opportunities to draw on to support your efforts.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Illinois has expanded to include options for those seeking the Child Development Associate and Child Care Professional credentials. T.E.A.C.H. has also added a bachelor's degree option. Funding has increased to $2.4 million with the potential to serve over 1000 recipients. For additional information, contact the T.E.A.C.H. office at 800-863-0499.

The local **Child Care Resource and Referral** agencies have also received a substantial increase in training dollars, including **Professional Development Funds** and **Accreditation Funds**. Funds can be used toward college coursework, to attend conferences or workshops, or to hire a consultant. They are available to practitioners at all levels and from all types of programs including family child care. The funds are distributed through a very simple application and selection process. July marks the beginning of a new funding cycle, so this is an excellent time to submit a request. Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Training Coordinator.

The **Illinois Director Credential (IDC)** was officially implemented May 1, 2000 at a ceremony in downtown Chicago. Nineteen directors were honored as the first recipients of the Credential for their achievement of competencies relating to center-based leadership and management. Twelve colleges and universities from across the state have submitted individual courses for approval or to become an IDC Entitled Program. Over the past few

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months more than 200 directors have requested IDC applications. For information about the Illinois Director Credential, contact Karen Bruning, IDC Coordinator, at 800-649-1884.

Implementation of the Illinois Director Credential has also added a new step on the professional development ladder, that of **Professional Growth Advisor (PGA)**. Level III IDC credentialed directors, experienced trainers, and community college adjunct faculty may become Professional Growth Advisors. The Professional Growth Advisors will be required to attend an advanced leadership training at National-Louis University this fall entitled, **The Next Step**. Information about Professional Growth Advisor opportunities can be received from the IDC office at INCCRRA, 800-649-1884. Information about the Next Step Training is available from the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 800-443-5522 ext 7703.

The Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children has also initiated a statewide accreditation project for both centers and family child care providers, called the **Statewide Accreditation Mentoring project (SAM)**. The project supports program accreditation with funding and mentoring. Application information is available from Kathy Howard at 815-626-8872.

On June 15, 2000, Governor Ryan announced passage – with funding – of the **Great START** legislation. Great START will reward educational achievement and longevity with a center or as a family child care provider with cash bonuses directly to the individual practitioner. Although the current funding is limited ($3 million), the program will eventually include a number of "steps" with an increased award for each step achieved. The Illinois Department of Human Services has convened an advisory group to develop a plan to implement the legislation. Great Start will be administered by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA). It is anticipated that the first reimbursements will be made in late spring 2001.

Add to these statewide opportunities several ongoing professional development initiatives including: ***Taking Charge of Change***, the **Chicago Accreditation Partnership,** the **Center for Early Education Management and Finance**, and the **Head Start Collaboration Office.** Center directors have a wealth of opportunities to improve their programs, support staff development and compensation, and increase their own leadership and management skills. Each of the programs listed is addressing one or more of the obstacles to professional growth in ways that can fit with nearly every type of early care and education program and individuals at any stage of their personal professional growth.

This fall, as you design your training calendar and work with individual staff to identify a professional growth plan, take advantage of the opportunities that are available to you. As the gatekeeper to quality, you have the power to initiate change and improve the quality of your program through the professional growth of your teachers.

Most important, become a model of ongoing professional development yourself. Pursue the Illinois Director Credential, take a management course, enroll in a degree program, lead your center through accreditation, or become a Professional Growth Advisor. Support your staff in their efforts to complete a CDA, CCP or degree – reward them, allow them time off, recognize them, and embrace their personal and professional goals.

By embarking on a mission to infuse professional development at every level of your center, you will be celebrating the fact that change is a necessary and essential ingredient in thriving organizations. Reward yourself through nature's confirmation that change is good. Take a walk in the woods, look out your window at the changing colors, note the change in temperature, see that toddler master her first peddle toy. Those things that are not changing around you are not living. Professional growth is just one affirmation of life. It is one that often carries over into all aspects of our lives, including feelings of self worth and family relationships.

See you in the classroom, at a conference, at an advisory meeting ... or at the nature preserve.

Valerie Dawkins Krajec is Associate Director of the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. She can be reached by telephone at 800-649-1884 or by e-mail at inccrra@ilchildcare.org.

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"What we want for our children...we should want for their teachers; that schools be places of learning for both of them, and that such learning be suffused with excitement, engagement, passion, challenge, creativity, and joy."

Andy Hargreaves

The Director's Toolbox

Tips for Giving Effective Workshops

Energizing Openings

Whether you provide informal workshops for your staff or more formal presentations for your professional colleagues at conferences, the things that happen in the first few minutes of your workshop will largely determine how productive your session will be. Your opening sets the tone for your entire workshop, so it is essential you start off on the right foot. In your opening you want to accomplish three things:

- ✔ arouse curiosity and get participants excited about the topic
- ✔ clarify the purpose of the presentation
- ✔ establish an association the participants have with the content to be presented

There are a number of different opening strategies you can use, but try to tap participants' curiosity and generate their interest with your very first sentence. The best openings appeal to emotions, not reason. It is your motivational hook to the rest of the day. Here are a few possibilities:

- **Ask a question.** You can ask a rhetorical question ("Have you ever been so frustrated with the staffing crisis you've thought of closing your center?") or a question that draws participants in immediately ("What is the single most challenging obstacle you face in recruiting quality staff?"). Having participants do or say something near the beginning of the workshop establishes the understanding that they will be actively involved during the session.
- **Share a personal story.** Starting out with a real-life experience or scenario that participants can relate to helps them connect emotionally with the topic. When I do training on interpersonal communication, I share an amusing tale of an airplane flight I once took and how the garbled miscommunications of the flight attendants ended up creating a windfall for the passengers in free coupons and travel vouchers. The story only takes about three minutes to tell, but it captures perfectly the importance of clarity in interpersonal communications.
- **Display an eye-catching visual.** Projecting a visual that is humorous or imaginative can focus participants' attention on the topic. I love to start workshops by showing a cartoon or zany illustration. It sets the tone for a lively, fun day. One of my favorites is an illustration I use to open a stress management workshop. The illustration shows a zebra whose stripes are unraveling. I've added the caption, "I think I'm under stress." As I display the illustration, I ask participants if they've ever felt like this zebra.
- **Make a provocative statement or share a shocking statistic.** Surprising participants with an unexpected statement or headline-grabbing statistic can serve as a call to action, getting people fired up for what comes next. "During the course of this workshop, three children are going to die in America as a result of gunfire. By the time you wake up tomorrow morning, nine more will have died. Today we're going to explore some of the steps you can take as administrators to curb violence against children." Just a reminder – if you use statistics, make sure you are able to cite the source.
- **Use a prop to demonstrate a point.** Props can be very effective for gaining attention at the beginning of a workshop. A friend of mine who led a computer training session for a group of early childhood administrators began his session by asking participants, "Have you ever felt so frustrated with your computer that you wanted to throw it on the ground?" He proceeded to pick up a computer and throw on the ground. He then said, "After today, you'll never have to feel that frustrated again!" (The computer, it turns out, was one he had retrieved from a junkyard). Needless to say, he got the group's attention.

Your opening needs to be brief, clear, and worded in positive terms. By the end of your opening, participants should know why the topic is relevant to them and they should have a sense that you are prepared, organized, and primed for a day of learning.

From Bloom, P. J. (2000). Workshop Essentials. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons, 847-295-8131.

Reflections on Quality: The Curriculum

by Jackie Smizer

Quest: The curriculum should be a journey that the classroom staff, children, and the parents experience together.

Universal: The curriculum should be developed with all children in the group in mind; special and individualized needs are considered.

Abundant: The curriculum should offer many alternatives—the classroom staff draw on the experiences (individually and collectively) of the children.

Language: The curriculum is rich in language experiences including children's native languages.

Imaginative: The curriculum should spark the imagination. It should encourage children to see possibilities that they might not have thought of before.

Tangible: The curriculum should be concrete. It should include activities that children can manipulate, experience, and share.

Yield: The curriculum produces children that are thinking, problem-solving, and excited about learning.

How does your curriculum measure up?

Planning Ahead

Professional Development Opportunities

September 27, 2000 - April 17, 2001
Directors' Technology Training

Learn the fundamentals of word processing, spreadsheets, and data management as they relate to your center's daily operations. Directors selected to participate in this training will learn a variety of practical tasks like creating newsletters and flyers, developing a budget, or giving a PowerPoint presentation. Each course meets for seven sessions. Funding for the Directors' Technology Training is provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services. Registration is $50. Individuals may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE-534) by paying an additional $418.

September 27 - October 18, 2000
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
National-Louis University
Chicago Campus

January 22 - February 12, 2001
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
National-Louis University
Elgin Campus

March 27 - April 17, 2001
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Lincoln Land Community College
Springfield, Illinois

October 27 - 28, 2000
Management Institute

Public Relations and Marketing Strategies for Early Childhood Programs

Promoting and maintaining a positive public image to parents, supporters, and prospective donors is essential to meet the demands of the changing market for child care services. The guest presenter for this management institute will be Ms. Julie Wassom, President of The Julian Group, Inc., a training and consulting firm with a specialty in child care marketing and enrollment building.

The registration fee of $150 includes continental breakfast, workshop sessions, lunch, and handouts. Individuals may receive 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE542) by attending one additional weekend, January 19 and 20, 2001, and paying an additional $418.

Friday, October 27, 2000
1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. and
Saturday, October 28, 2000
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
The Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University
Wheeling Campus

May 3 - 5, 2001
Leadership Connections - A Conference for Illinois Directors

Look for more details about this exciting new event in the fall issue of *The Director's Link.*

For more information about any of these training opportunities, contact Ms. Eileen Eisenberg, Training Coordinator, 800-443-5522, ext. 7703.

The Accreditation Corner

Setting Personal and Professional Goals

Summer is a perfect time to talk with staff about setting personal and professional goals. It is a time to reflect upon the past year – how comfortable the teachers were with classroom routines and curricular approaches and how effective communication was between parents, administration, and the teaching staff. It is also the time to assess which professional development opportunities were most beneficial and what future resources should be provided.

Setting aside quality time for teaching staff to meet individually with the director before the school year begins sends an important message to the staff that their contribution to the center is valued. Directors who listen carefully to what their teachers say about how things function in the center open the door to gaining mutual trust and respect. Teachers who feel supported by the administration become personally invested in their centers.

Within the NAEYC accreditation self-study materials, there are over 30 individual administration and evaluation criterion that reflect the relationship between goal setting, effective communication, ongoing evaluation, and professional development. Here are a few.

Goal Setting

- At least annually, the director and staff conduct an assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and to set program goals for the year.
- Regular staff meetings are held for staff to consult on program planning, to plan for implementing and attaining goals, to plan for individual children, and to discuss program and working conditions.

Effective Communication

- Staff interactions reflect mutual trust, respect, and support for each other.
- Staff members seek out and acknowledge each other's ideas and opinions.
- Staff gives positive recognition to each other's skills and accomplishments.
- Staff communicates with each other to ensure smooth operations.

Professional Development

- The program provides regular opportunities for staff to participate in ongoing professional development to improve skills in working with children and families or to prepare them to assume more responsible positions.
- Ongoing professional development provides continuing education and other opportunities for staff to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field.

Evaluation

- All staff is evaluated at least annually by the director or other appropriate supervisor.
- Results of staff evaluation are written and confidential. They are discussed privately with the staff member.
- Staff evaluations include classroom observation. Evaluation is based on the employee's job description and previously established goals for improvement.
- Staff is informed of evaluation criteria in advance.
- Staff has an opportunity to evaluate their own performance.
- A plan for staff training is generated from the staff evaluation process.

Family Friendly Practices

Ida Mae Fletcher Family Life Center

Ida Mae Fletcher Family Life Center is located in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago. The center was named after a native of Mississippi who migrated to Chicago, became a community activist, and championed the right of free and equal access of quality education for children in low-income communities. As a part of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago, the Ida Mae Fletcher Family Life Center provides a full-day Head Start program for 40 children.

Velma Chew, the Head Start director, collaborates with local agencies to create a wide range of parent involvement programs for the center. Holidays are celebrated in grand style with food, games, and crafts making. Parent education workshops address serious issues of child abuse, domestic violence, and affordable and appropriate nutrition for young children.

Velma and her staff welcome parents as volunteers in the classroom, to help tend the backyard garden, to learn about computer technology, and to use the resource lending library. A popular annual event is the family reading night co-sponsored by the center, the Douglas Park Library, Hug-A-Book, University of Illinois, and the Illinois Department of Central Management Services.

Like the center's namesake, Ms. Chew is energized by contributing her time to community activities. "It is important to give of yourself to strengthen children and families for future generations," states Velma. She actively participates in the Boys and Girls Clubs' Feed the Homeless project, volunteers for the Children's Memorial Hospital telethon, performs clowning, and demonstrates balloon art for various charitable organizations. Velma recently received her Masters' degree in Early Childhood Administration from National-Louis University.

When the Ida Mae Fletcher Family Life Center received NAEYC accreditation this past spring, Velma extended a celebration invitation to everyone in the North Lawndale community. She proudly states, "Our site achieved accreditation by working hard for our families and giving constant attention to their needs. It was only fitting that the community should be invited to the celebration!"

Director's Profile

Teri Talan Embracing and Leading Change

Teri Talan has been the Executive Director of the Evanston Day Nursery (EDN) for 12 years. Located in Evanston, a suburb just north of Chicago, EDN has provided for the early care and education needs of young children for over 88 years. The center serves 52 children (3 through 9 years of age) and their families in a cozy, Victorian-era house with an enormous play yard.

The Evanston Day Nursery has a dedicated Board of Directors and a committed staff. This winning combination has resulted in an organization that has successfully adapted to changing community needs, doubled the size of its facility and enrollment, and sustained program continuity with almost no staff turnover.

The Evanston Day Nursery has been NAEYC accredited since 1996. "I believe the most lasting benefit of the accreditation self-study process was the change in organizational culture that resulted, says Teri." "The staff, parents, and board engaged in a collaborative process of program assessment and improvement that continues to be the norm at the center. At Evanston Day Nursery, change is no longer viewed as the enemy."

Teri's background is unusual for a director of an early childhood program. She first obtained a bachelor's degree in art history, then a law degree, and most recently, a master's degree in Early Childhood Leadership and Advocacy from National-Louis University. Prior to coming to EDN, Teri was the Executive Director of The Child Advocate Association, a legal and social service advocacy program providing a multi-disciplinary approach to the identification, protection, and treatment of abused and neglected children. Teri practiced law in the juvenile justice system for fifteen years before becoming an early childhood educator.

Teri remains true to her advocacy roots. She has served on the Board and Executive Committee of the Day Care Action Council of Illinois (DCACI) for eight years. As a District Coordinator for DCACI, Teri was actively engaged in legislative advocacy to promote Great START (Strategies to Attract and Retain Teachers). "I am excited about the enactment of Great START," says Teri. "I am confident that Illinois is taking the first step toward reducing the rate of staff turnover by providing financial rewards to early childhood staff who remain in their positions for a designated length of time."

For the past two years, Teri was a member of the Management Committee responsible for designing the newly launched Illinois Director Credential (IDC). She is currently a member of the first Director Credential Commission that will be responsible for the validation of directors' skills, competencies, and accomplishments. Teri's commitment to the Illinois Director Credential is closely related to her advocacy work on behalf of the Great START legislation. "I believe the Illinois Director Credential is one step in the creation of an integrated, professional development system that is an essential component of a stable early care and education workforce," she says.

Teri grew up with Evanston Day Nursery already a part of her life. Her mother, Norma Talan, was the family service worker at EDN for 15 years. Teri credits her mother for instilling in her a lifelong concern for the well being of children and families. Teri credits her father, an attorney who always represented the "little guy against the system," for being her role model of advocacy in action. Discussions at the family dinner table often focused on children's needs and children's rights.

Teri is married to Art Morganstein, a special education teacher in the Chicago Public Schools. They have three children, Daniel, Aaron, and Nori, as well as a beloved dog, Mozart. "Art and I were married 27 years ago, exactly one year after meeting on the Rue St. Jacques in Paris," says Teri, "but that is a story for another day."

Grant$ Update

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership has recently received grants that will support the launching of two new professional development initiatives.

The McCormick Tribune Foundation has funded the Center to host a statewide conference specifically geared to early childhood center directors. The event, Leadership Connections, will be held at the Marriott O'Hare, May 3-5, 2001. The conference will feature national experts in leadership and management and provide three stimulating days of training, exhibits, networking, and fun. Registration will be limited to 300 people. Look for a brochure describing this exciting new professional development opportunity in your mailbox this fall.

The W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation has funded the Center for Early Childhood Leadership to provide advanced leadership training for 20 seasoned professionals. The Next Step training will build coaching and mentoring skills, increase cross-cultural sensitivity, enhance presentation skills, and prepare participants as Illinois Director Credential professional growth advisors and National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation mentors. The training will be done in collaboration with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).

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The Director's Link

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University

Fall 2000

Magnet Marketing

Drawing Prospects to Your Center Until They Enroll

By Julie Wassom

If you hold a powerful magnet near a cluster of paper clips, an amazing thing happens. The force of the magnet draws to it not one, but most of the paper clips. If you remove the clips then hold the magnet near them again, almost all of them return to the magnet.

If you develop a powerful marketing program for your center, you will draw not just one, but many prospects to you again and again. I call this "magnet marketing." With each new encounter, you have another opportunity to secure an enrollment.

Marketing is defined as all the methods used to communicate your image to all your target audiences in a manner that leads them to take action. This includes everything from your center's brochure to a booth at a local festival to the way you answer an inquiry call. Regardless of what you do to communicate the image of your center and its services, the key to achieving magnet marketing is to make those messages *creative*, *consistent*, and *continual*.

Creative

If you were selling sheet metal, it might be hard to market creatively. But child care is an industry where creative marketing is welcomed and readily accepted by target audiences. So how do you creatively communicate your center's marketing message?

I agree with professional speaker, Joel Weldon, who says, "Look around you at what others are doing and... do something else." Take note of how other child care providers around you are marketing and determine how you could communicate your center's image in a way that is unique and different.

Research has shown that most people are exposed to 1800 to 2700 commercial messages a day. Some of those will undoubtedly be from your competitors. If you want prospects to notice your center, you must do what the marketing industry calls "intrude through the clutter." To do that, you have to be creative.

Creativity generates *awareness*, an essential first step to generating inquiries and referrals. You still need to have a solid mix of marketing activities, but the more creatively you do them, the more likely you will be to draw prospects and referring customers to your center again and again.

Continued on page 2

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Continued from front page

Consistent

The second magnet marketing key is consistency. This means you create an identifiable image that is recognized no matter where your message is communicated. It requires that you use the same look, typestyle, colors, and logo in all your printed marketing materials.

A logo is a visual image that identifies you. Whether it's a giant teddy bear mascot or a line drawing done by one of your children that appears on your stationery and business cards, your image must be easily recognizable to your target audiences. You want them to see it and immediately connect it with your center.

McDonalds is a company that has mastered consistency with a very simple image—yellow arches. Wouldn't you agree it's a logo that is unique, you'd recognize it anywhere, and it draws people back repeatedly? No doubt about it! In recent figures of annual sales, McDonalds outsold Burger King more than two to one.

If you have a tagline—and I recommend that you do—use it every time your center's name appears anywhere. A tagline gives your audiences a brief phrase that draws an image in their minds of who you are and what is unique about you. "Quality Child Care at Work" is the tagline for Bright Horizons Children's Centers. It identifies what they do and how they want to be positioned in the minds of their prospects and referral sources.

Consistency isn't limited to printed collateral, broadcast, or even Internet messages. Does everyone at your center answer the telephone with a consistent greeting? Does your van (I call them "rolling billboards") have your center's name and telephone number painted on it? Does your newsletter reflect the delivery of your marketing messages? Can your customers feel comfortable referring their friends to you knowing the quality of care in every room is consistently high?

Consistency creates *recognition*, the second step in generating inquiries and referrals. Be clear on what your unique marketing messages are, and deliver them consistently in all the methods you use to draw target audiences to your center.

Continual

In his book *Guerilla Marketing*, Jay Conrad Levinson tells us "People forget fast." He's right. Unless you continually communicate your marketing messages, your prospects—and your customers—forget you. When that happens, they are most vulnerable to the messages they receive from your competitors.

If you want to draw prospective buyers to your center, they must remember you. Spaced repetition is the key to retention. Complete this phrase: "You're in good hands with _____." The reason you know it is "Allstate" is because you have heard or seen it repeatedly. The more times and places target audiences get your marketing message, the more likely they'll be to remember you when they need to use or refer child care services.

The most efficient way to market continually is to use a mix of marketing methods on an ongoing basis. Called *layering*, this gives you the most opportunity for broad reach and frequency of the delivery of your center's marketing message. Your marketing action plan should include activities in advertising, public relations, community involvement, and customer relations.

Continual marketing creates *retention* of your center's image. It gives you prime positioning in the minds of your prospects, customers, and referral sources. When the child care need arises, the force of that positioning draws them to you like—you guessed it—a magnet.

Creative, consistent, continual marketing will give you the awareness, recognition, and retention that lead to more inquiries and referrals. The more times you can draw prospects to your center, the more chances you have to secure enrollments. Practice these techniques and your marketing will be magnetic. And may the force be with you.

Julie Wassom was featured speaker at the Center for Early Childhood Leadership's Fall Management Institute. Julie is President of The Julian Group, Inc., a training and consulting firm with a specialty in child care marketing. She is the author of The Enrollment Building Success Library of print and audiotape learning programs. She can be reached at (800) 876-0260 or (303) 698-2306.

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The Director's Link is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois. If you have received more than one copy of this newsletter, please share it with a colleague. Address corrections should be directed to:

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"Effective leaders lead the way without getting in the way"

Cile Chevaz

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The Director's Toolbox

Design Considerations for an Eye-Catching Newsletter

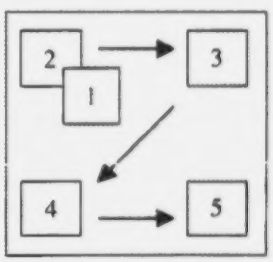
If you've put a lot of work into developing the content of your center's newsletter, you want to make sure it catches and sustains the attention of your readership. Applying a few basic design principles can help you ensure that people will actually read the newsletter you write. Here are some things to think about.

As a designer, you have 3 to 7 seconds to grab your reader's attention

Studies show that newsletter readers experience three discreet "stages of relevance." At Stage 1 your audience initially asks themselves if they care about your message. As a designer, you have 3 to 7 seconds to grab their attention through the use of headlines, titles, photos, and captions. If your audience reaches Stage 2 they will then ask themselves if they really care about your message. You will have 1 to 90 seconds to keep their interest through short body text, numbered and bulleted lists, and other graphic devices like page borders and column dividers. If your audience reaches Stage 3, you have successfully piqued their curiosity. They then decide if they have time to read your newsletter now or later.

Layout

Most people look at a document in a typical "Z" path (see diagram). Anything located in the upper left quadrant has more optical weight than anything located anywhere else. Make sure these 2 zones contain the most information you want to get across to your audience. Zone 4 is considered the dead zone and contains the least amount of optical weight. Use this zone as a place to hide negative information or to spice up with an attractive picture. Zone 5 is called the terminal zone. Here you let your audience know what you would like them to do next.



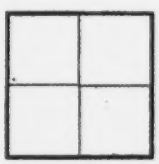
Typeface

Serif fonts such as Times New Roman and Courier are considered highly readable. Use these fonts for your text. Sans Serif fonts such as Helvetica and Tahoma are perceived as modern and fun. They typically allow people to read faster but less accurately. Use these fonts for titles, headlines, and captions. Bolded text will slow readers down, so stay away from bolding more than 5 to 7 consecutive words. Underlined text decreases readability even more. **IF YOU REALLY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOUR READER IGNORES YOUR MESSAGE, TYPE IT IN CAPS, BOLD, AND UNDERLINE IT!**

Graphics and Color Placement

A reader's attention will follow the movement indicated in a picture.

A reader's eyes will follow the direction of the way a picture is facing.



The placement of color creates a powerful symmetry. Use it to establish balance on a page.

Alignment

Many readers prefer text that is aligned to the left because it looks informal and friendly. Justified text adds white space and makes text look more formal and professional. Be cautious with using hyphens; avoid using more than 3 in a single column.

Ideas compiled by Tim Walker. Adapted from CareerTrack. (1998).

Planning Ahead

Professional Development Opportunities

January - March, 2001
Online Courses for Directors

ECE515
Financial and Legal Aspects of Child Care Management (3 s.h.)
Instructor: Doug Clark

ECE582G
Writing and Editing for Effective Communication (1 s.h.)
Instructor: Judy Helm

EPS500A
Human Development with an Emphasis on Early Childhood (3 s.h.)
Instructor: Judy Helm

January - February 2001
Take Time Out to Chat with the Experts Online!

The Time Out! discussion forum on the Center for Early Childhood Leadership's Web site will host four nationally renowned early childhood experts this winter – Roger Neugebauer, Diane Trister Dodge, Gwen Morgan, and Jim Greenman. This is your opportunity to chat with the people who have written the books and helped shape early childhood policy and practice. Each expert will be the featured guest for a week-long open discussion on issues of interest to center directors. Check out the Center's Web site (www.nl.edu/cecl) for a more detailed schedule and information on how to log on.

March 3, 2001
Grantswriting Institute

Planning for a Secure Future in a Changing Climate is the theme of the Center's third annual grantswriting institute. Presented by Mary Ellen Bleeden, this institute will address grantswriting as an essential skill and examine the fundraising process as an integral part of an organization's strategic plan. Learn about funding sources, current national and state initiatives, and practical ideas about developing fundraising goals.

Saturday, March 3, 2001
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

National-Louis University
Wheeling Campus Annex

$75 includes continental breakfast, lunch, and workshop materials

Participants may also earn 2 s.h. of graduate credit (ECE540) by participating in a follow-up grantswriting clinic in April 2001.

May 3 - 5, 2001
Leadership Connections

Join other directors from across the state in an exciting new professional development experience – *Leadership Connections*. During this three-day conference, directors will learn creative solutions to the management challenges they face, share ideas and innovations, establish new friendships, renew old acquaintances, and be inspired by national experts from a variety of leadership disciplines. The *Leadership Connections* conference will be limited to 300 participants. Look for registration information in your mailbox this December.

May 3 - 5, 2001
Marriott-O'Hare Hotel
Chicago

Registration: $225

For more information about these training opportunities, contact Ms. Eileen Eisenberg, Training Coordinator, 800-443-5522, ext. 7703.

Public Policy Update

Last spring, the Illinois General Assembly passed Great START (Strategy to Attract and Retain Teachers), a program to provide salary supplements to caregivers in licensed care and education settings. This program is designed to address the critical staffing crisis and to help improve children's outcomes by offering financial incentives to retain qualified staff.

A committee composed of directors, educators, advocates, and Illinois Department of Human Services representatives has worked diligently over the past several months to develop a strategy to implement the legislation. The most difficult part of their assignment was deciding how to limit the pool of recipients in the first year when there is only $3 million to fund a program estimated to cost $25 million to implement.

For the long-term, the committee has developed a cash supplement scale that ranges from $300 for assistant teachers and family child care providers with a CDA or CCA to $3,900 for teachers, directors, and family child care providers with a master's degree in early childhood education or child development. By rewarding education, this scale encourages the retention of highly qualified staff.

For the first year, the committee has recommended differential awards based on the proposed scale rather than giving small, token awards to all eligible applicants. This decision, made after long and hard debate, was based on the strong belief that the supplements need to be meaningful in order for the program to have its intended outcome of reducing turnover.

It is critically important that the hard decisions made for the first year of implementation not divide the early childhood professional community. Great START is a great program with proven results for reducing turnover and improving the professional status of the early childhood work force. Now, more than ever, the early childhood leadership needs to pull together to advocate for full funding for this new initiative in the second year.

For additional information about the role you can plan in supporting Great START, contact Teri Talan, Public Policy Liaison for the Center for Early Childhood Leadership (800) 443-5522, ext. 7707.

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The Accreditation Corner

Interactions Among Teachers and Families

Positive interaction among center staff and the families they serve is perhaps the most influential component of any early childhood program's marketing plan. It can also be said that effective communication among families and program staff is the foundation on which positive interactions are built.

Within the NAEYC accreditation self-study materials, there are specific criteria that focus on the importance of positive interactions among teachers and the families of the children in their care. Here a few:

Clear and Consistent Communication

- A written description of the program's philosophy is available to families.
- Written operating policies and procedures are available to families.
- A verbal and/or written system is established for sharing among both staff and parents the day-to-day happenings that affect children.
- Families are informed about the program and the curriculum and about policy or regulatory changes and other critical issues that could potentially affect the program and/or the early childhood profession through newsletters, bulletin boards, and other appropriate means.

Customized Communication

- A process has been developed for orienting children and families to the program that may include a pre-enrollment visit, family orientation meeting, or gradual introduction of children to the program that supports children and families through the separation process.
- Programs with non-English speaking families provide materials in the family's native language or arrange for translation.
- Parents and other family members are encouraged to be involved in the program in various ways, taking into consideration working parents and those with little spare time.
- Teachers listen to parents, seek to understand their goals and preferences for their children, and respect cultural and family differences.
- When staff are not of the linguistic and cultural background of the children/families, increased efforts are made to ensure communication with families, such as regular conferences with a translator present.

Cooperative Communication

- Teachers seek parents' specific ideas for dealing with the child when at the program.
- Conferences are held at least once a year and at other times, as needed, to discuss children's progress, accomplishments, and difficulties at home and at the program.
- Teachers work in partnership with families, establishing and maintaining regular, on-going, two-way communication with children's parents to build trust and mutual understanding and to ensure that children's learning and developmental needs are met.
- Teachers and parents work together to make decisions about how to best support children's development and learning or to handle problems or differences of opinion as they arise.
- Teachers solicit and incorporate parent's knowledge about their children into ongoing assessment and planning.
- Policies ensure that staff and parents have an effective way of negotiating difficulties and differences that arise in their interactions.
- The program has a variety of known and accepted techniques to handle differences, such as a parent policy council, an appeals committee, special conferences, or individual meetings.

Collaborative Communication

- Administrators and teachers are familiar with and make appropriate use of community resources including social services, mental and physical health agencies, and educational programs such as museums and libraries.
- Program personnel connect families with needed resources and comprehensive services based on the needs and interests observed by staff or expressed by families.

Director's Profile

Michael Davey Connected With His Community

As Executive Director of Mt. Prospect Child Care Center, Michael Davey has grown accustomed to wearing many hats: administrator, visionary, teacher, and student just to name a few. Since coming to MPCCC in 1995, Michael's commitment to increasing center quality has been relentless, and he continues to navigate the program through a series of building renovations and program enhancements.

Mt. Prospect Child Care Center is in self-study for NAEYC accreditation, and Michael himself is pursuing a graduate degree in early childhood administration at National-Louis University. Earlier this year as a member of the pilot cohort seeking the Illinois Director Credential, Michael was the first male in the state to receive this recognition.

Michael's work to improve child care quality has not been confined to his 45-year-old center located in northwest suburban Chicago. His efforts to position Mt. Prospect Child Care Center as a good neighbor and involved corporate partner are also bearing fruit.

This past August, the children in MPCCC's Summer Explorers 2000 camp were the first to submit artifacts for the "Memories of the Future" Millennium Project, a community time capsule developed cooperatively by the local historical society, public library, park district, and village government.

The Summer Explorers work for the Millennium Project has proven to be much more than an exercise in active learning—it was also an opportunity for the children to connect with their community. According to Michael, "We believe that early childhood education is a collaboration between the center, it's families, and the neighboring community." As a bonus, the story of the Summer Explorers' presentation to the Millennium Project was featured in the *Neighbor* section of the *Daily Herald*, Illinois' third largest newspaper with a concentrated readership in the greater Chicago area.

Michael eagerly embraces the value of favorable media attention but points out that it seldom happens by coincidence. He has adopted a less-is-more public relations approach that may be the key behind his success in attracting publicity. "You must be selective and sure that what you're promoting is something of substance," says Michael. "We want our news to be distinctive, the kind that you see on the front page rather than being hidden in a special advertisement section of the newspaper."

To ensure MPCCC's "freshness," Michael limits the number of press releases and telephone invitations he makes to local news reporters each year. He also makes certain that Mt. Prospect Child Care Center maintains a visible profile through regular participation in civic celebrations and community projects. Active participation by the center in the 1996 "Trees of Mt. Prospect" commemoration and the village "Winter Parade" in 1999 was reported in local features sections of the *Daily Herald* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Michael has witnessed how strong community connections and positive media attention have fortified relationships among the 70 families his program serves. "The parents were thrilled," he said of the Summer Explorers' recent mention by the local press. "They couldn't get enough copies of the paper."

In addition to his work to promote Mount Prospect Child Care Center , Michael is also investing in his own development as an early childhood professional. His sacrifice of time and energy has not only benefited the MPCCC staff and clientele, but has increased his credibility as an educator and advocate for program quality. As a result of his continued schooling and frequent participation as a workshop presenter, Michael is becoming known as a trusted early childhood resource in his community.

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